N° XV.

THE THEATRICAL
CENSOR.

BY A CITIZEN.

"Yet come, cold Monitor! half foe, half friend,
"Whom vice can't fear, whom virtue can't commend;
"Come, Candour! by thy dull indiff'rence known,
"Thou equal-blooded judge! thou lukewarm drone!
"Who, fashion'd without feelings, dost expect
"We call that *Virtue* which we know *Defect:*
"Come, and observe the nature of our crimes,
"The gross and rank complexion of the times;
"Observe it well, and then review my plan;
"Praise if you will, or censure if you can."

Saturday Evening, March 15th, 1806.

MR. CAIN.

WE have been unjustly accused of personal dislike to this gentleman, with whom no person in the management of the Theatrical Censor has ever had the least connection or converse. We are accused of being envious of *native* talents. Was Mr. Cain, then, born in America? We have always understood that he first drew breath in England. But can any one be led to believe that our observations have been influenced by any likings or antipathy to persons of any particular country or state? We think not. If Mr. Cain has been really *benefited* by such insinuations, we sincerely rejoice; but, at present, we are inclined to believe the reverse.

In our various remarks on the acting of Mr. C. we have said much less of his inattention and forgetfulness than our

duty seemed to indicate. 'Whether first nature' is the cause of his constant blunders, or whether, in defiance of the opinion of that Public by whom he is supported, he wilfully neglects his duty, we must still make the same conclusion, that, as an actor, he merits censure. Mr. Cain is particularly unhappy in blank verse, which must arise principally from want of ear; and it would be in vain to follow him through all his *variations* of an author's text, and the truly 'inexplicable dumb show' which he frequently substitutes for the most sublime passages of Shakespear.

To observe on his Romeo would be occupying more of our time than the subject deserves; and we consider *benefit* performances in some measure exempt from criticism.

On that score principally we claim the indulgence of our readers for not publishing this number at the usual time.

Mr. Cain, we conceive, might, by application and care, become a respectable performer. He has an expressive countenance, a good voice, and a pleasing figure. Let him not imagine that the Theatrical Censor is his enemy. If, next season, he return improved, we shall be more prompt to praise than we have been to censure him.

BENEFITS.

The benefits of Mrs. Wignell, Mr. Jefferson, and Mr. Cain, were very productive. Mr. Harwood, we are informed, cleared eight or nine hundred dollars; and the rest of the performers have no reason to complain of want of public patronage.

We sincerely rejoice at Mr. Harwood's success. As a performer, in many characters he is very great. In private life, his talents and polished demeanor entitle him to the patronage and consideration of an enlightened public.

The following lines have been handed to us as a hasty production, spoken during the exhibition of Mr. Holland's interesting painting of the siege of Derne, on Friday evening, for his benefit.

When first this clay the Forming Hand
Touch'd with its own ethereal fire,
For this was given the magic Lyre,
And, with the boon, this high command,
That still, to every virtue true,
Its varied sounds, or sweet or strong,
Should to the Brave and Good give homage due,
And swell for these alone the soul-enthralling song.

Nor less the Pencil's wond'rous art,
Enjoin'd to play this nobler part;
Enjoin'd, through every age, to trace
The Worthies of the human race,
On Valour's head to place unfading wreaths,
While all is glory round, and all the canvass breathes.

Captives forlorn,
From wives and children torn,
On a far-distant shore,
Columbia's sons barbarian fetters wore:
To EATON's hand Columbia trusts her cause;
His righteous sword the warrior draws;
Swift on her foes she sees her thunders hurl'd
(The thunders of a New-born World):
His gallant march the Chief pursues, and saves
His groaning brethren from the gripe of slaves.

Such scenes, to-night, with patriot warmth portray'd,
To grace our stage, the Painter has display'd;
Here, to your eyes the zealous artist shows
How toil'd your heroes, and how fell your foes;
How generous EATON, in his country's might,
For You and Freedom dar'd the mortal fight;
Shows how O'BANNON, brave among the brave,
Taught Moors to dread the White Men of the wave:
Undaunted SPENCE! for thee the colours flow;
For thee, DECATUR, still they warmer glow!

O Freemen! cherish the diviner arts,
Friends of your rights, and tutors of your hearts!
Bright in her charms, let Virtue beam in view;
Lov'd be the substance, lov'd the picture too!
So shall your Youth to honest deeds aspire;
So shall your Country catch the glorious fire;
So shall your Vet'rans, in each grateful breast,
Find the best Sweet'ner of the Soldier's rest;
So shall this Land, to Independence dear,
Nor foreign nor domestic tyrant fear.

MEMOIRS OF THE AUTHOR OF THE HONEY-MOON.

Mr. John Tobin, the author of the *Honey-Moon*, was born at Salisbury, in England, January 28, 1770. The maiden name of his mother was Elizabeth Webbe, a West Indian; and, by her, he was the third son of Mr. James Tobin, born in London, but an inhabitant of the island of Nevis. In 1785, he was articled to an eminent solicitor of Lincoln's Inn. After the death of that gentleman, he became a partner with three other clerks in the office; but, disagreements happening, which ended in a chancery-suit, he entered into a new partnership, with a friend, Mr. Ange. In 1803, finding his health decline, he went, by the advice of his physicians, to reside with a relation in Cornwall; but, his disorder assuming the form of consumption, he was induced, in November, 1804, to embark at Bristol for the West Indies, hoping benefit from a warmer climate. Detained at Cork some days, the vessel sailed from that port on the 7th of December, and on that day he died. Contrary winds obliged the ship to return at the Cove of Cork, where his body was carried on shore and buried. Previously to the commencement of this disease, his health generally appeared good; but he was always of a spare habit, and, when a boy, indisposed to violent and muscular exercises. When at school, he was quick in acquiring lessons, tranquil of disposition, and not prone to give nor take offence. Delighting to indulge in revery, his pursuits were

of a peaceable and literary kind. On the banks of the Avon, near Salisbury, where he spent his holidays with his grandfather, he acquired a love of angling, to which he was ever afterward devoted; and his ardour for it was increased by the few opportunities in which it could be indulged. Averse to walking, unless when he had a strong motive, his hours were lost in thought, or in the creations of an active mind. Abstracted, and constitutionally indolent, he was alike apt to forget forms, and neglect pecuniary concerns; yet, having a high sense of moral duty, he never broke even trifling engagements. Of inflexible integrity himself, he detested selfishness, and carefully avoided men of hollow principles, however bland their manners, or brilliant their accomplishments. By taking a part in school performances, and visiting the theatre at Southampton, he acquired a taste for the drama, and his first piece was written before the year 1789. Constantly engaged after this period in dramatic compositions, they were offered to the theatres, but were all rejected, except a comedy called *The Pharo Table*, which was accepted at Drury-Lane, though never performed. On quitting London, he left the *Honey-Moon*, the last piece he had finished, with his brother: they had resided ten years together, united by kindred feelings, and similarity of sentiment and pursuit. To this brother, who had so often been his unsuccessful negociator at the theatres, he committed the care of bringing the piece on the stage, having received a promise from the manager that it should be performed.

For a mind like his, the Court of Chancery had few charms; nor did he follow his profession with that zeal which can this way acquire wealth and fame; but, he loved independence, had a just sense of duty, and was punctual, while in health, in attending at the office. His mind, indeed, might be absent, and, when he left the place, he ceased to think of such business.

The *Pharo Table* was chiefly written in bed, during illness, in the year 1795; and his other pieces, between the hours

of nine and twelve, after his return from Lincoln's Inn. He frequently composed while walking the streets, and especially songs, which he usually committed to writing when he came home. Animated by society, and enjoying rational conversation, yet, as solitude never displeased him, he did not anxiously seek company; though always happy to see a few valued friends, their absence was never perceptible. Unruffled by the accidents of life, possessed of fortitude not easily shaken, and with a mind never unemployed, he was subject to no fits of weariness. "He was altogether the happiest man I ever knew." Though the progress of the disease alarmed him, he contemplated death without fear or superstition. Hope and fancy pictured to him his future success on the stage, while his bodily powers were wasting, and his energies daily on the decline. "He died without a groan." While at Falmouth, he revised some of his works, and wrote notes on Shakespeare, intending to contribute to a new edition of our immortal bard. Two of his unfinished plays it was his intention to complete in the West Indies. A constant reader of Beaumont and Fletcher, and the writers of that age, he was no less an admirer of Farquar, and some of his contemporaries. He also read some Spanish comedies, but found little to admire, except the ingenuity of their plots. Genuine comedy he supposed might yet find support from the public, and a better taste be revived, notwithstanding the mercenary motives by which it continues to be depraved. Deeply sensible of the moral influence of the Drama, he scorned to flatter the base prejudices, or the sickly imaginations, of the great vulgar, or the small.

A New Publication, called THE POLYANTHOS, *printed in Boston, has the following sketch of the Life of* MR. FENNELL.

Descended from a family of the first repectability, in London, Mr. Fennell received a liberal education, and was ori-

ginally intended for the pursuit of the law: but a strong predilection for the *stage* induced him early to resign his Blackstone for the more attractive pages of Shakespeare, and his theatrical passion being indulged without the consent of his friends, whose prejudices were equally invincible on the one side, as his on the other, he selected Edinburgh, as being distant from his residence, for his first theatrical essay, where he performed, in 1787, the parts of Jaffier, Othello, &c. with great applause, and under the assumed name of *Camoray*.

Mr. Fennell's great and unexpected success at Edinburgh induced him to contemplate a successful reception at London, to which place he soon after returned. On his return here, he called on Mr. Harris (without introduction of any kind)—but having opened his business, and recited a few passages of dramatic compositions before this gentleman, Mr. Harris was so highly gratified by these specimens of his ability, that a night was immediately fixed for his *début* at Covent-Garden, where he ran through his principal characters with much success; but still retaining his fictitious name.

The increasing fame of Mr. Fennell induced the managers of the Edinburgh Theatre to wish his return to their stage, to which he proceeded, and played there some time with approbation, till one evening he was announced to perform the character of Jaffier, and the gentleman who had formerly represented it (Mr. Wood) was fixed for Pierre; but enraged at the exchange, though the characters have ever been deemed equally good, Mr. Wood complained of the injustice of the manager (probably from motives of envy to Mr. Fennell) to his friends. Loaded with invectives by the Plebeian critics of the town, he was called upon to make an humiliating apology, which he would not submit to; a law-case ensued on both sides, which lasted a long time, but was of more *expense* to all parties than *profit* to any.

Immediately after this singularly infamous affair, Mr. Fennell quitted the stage in that city with indignation, and played a short time at York; but, in 1789, he returned to London, where he resumed his situation for one season (but without the expected success), at Covent Garden. He afterward engaged in a periodical publication, called the "Theatrical Guardian," and produced a comedy entitled "Lindor and Clara; or, a Trip to Gibraltar;" which has been frequently performed, and was printed, 1791.

Not long after this, Mr. Fennell was engaged by the late Mr. Wignell, at his New Theatre, Philadelphia, and met with great success. He has since performed at the various theatres on the continent; but, for some reasons unknown to us (a circumstance to be lamented by all lovers of the drama), Mr. Fennell, about two years ago, took leave of the stage, and has since appeared only occasionally. He is now engaged in an extensive establishment of Salt-Works, the plan of manufacturing which he has brought to great perfection.

Mr. Fennel's deportment is graceful—his person majestic—his face admirably calculated for the stage—his action easy and judicious—his utterance distinct and natural. He excels in the more weighty characters of the drama; his masterpiece is "Othello," the "Moor of Venice." His manners are polished, and his understanding refined.

Mr. Fennell's residence is near New-London. He is now on a visit to New-York and Philadelphia; at which places he has been prevailed upon to run through his principal characters.

It is whispered that Mr. Cooper will perform a few nights in Philadelphia, before the Theatre closes.

Mr. Fennell is engaged to perform four nights more.

The price of this work is 50 cents for four numbers. To be had at No. 42, Walnut-street, and at Mr. Phillips's Circulating Library, south Fourth-street. Communications, and orders from the country, received at the former place.